

July 28, 2013

Dear Chairman Damschen and Members of the Committee:

I see that the legislature is studying brain injury and the availability of services for people in ND who have a brain injury. This is of interest to our family because my husband, Kevin, sustained a brain injury in 2011 and we still do not know where to turn to help.

In February of 2011, Kevin Wolf, a 49-year-old body shop worker and father of two was clinically pronounced dead. No heartbeat could be found. Kevin was enjoying a night out with friends playing a game of darts. The next thing he remembers is waking up in a different city, an unfamiliar hospital and it was eleven days later. Fate happened to be on Kevin's side. Three off duty police officers were in the same building and started doing CPR. When the ambulance arrived, they defibrillated him twice and got a rhythm. As he reached Mercy Hospital ER, once again, there was no heart rate. After one more "zap" with the defibrillator, there was no pulse. He was flat lined and the team needed to "call the code". Then, there is was, a slight pulse was felt and once again, Kevin was "zapped". The medical team had to use the defibrillators two more times on the way to Minot. This procedure cannot be done in the air, so the helicopter had to land in Rugby and once again on Highway 2.

Once in Minot, Kevin's heart quit again. He ended up in an induced coma, had a pacemaker put in and wasn't given much of a chance of recovery. Hard decisions were being asked of his family. But like the rest of Kevin's story, the ending is one of surprise and blessings. According to Kevin, "apparently, I was supposed to come back and tell my story". Per Kevin's doctor, Dr. Dodin of Trinity Medical Group, Kevin suffered a significant brain injury due to his cardiac arrest. He will need a lot of assistance and supervision, he will have significant limitations as well as mental and physical care.

A comprehensive system of care would be extremely beneficial for us because then Kevin would have already been receiving help in various areas that are now difficult for him. Since his brain injury, he is unable to work in auto body, which he had done for over 30 years. Recently he worked various jobs but has not found what is suitable for him, he has been released from several jobs due to inappropriate statements, actions or lack of remembering what he was supposed to do and his short-term memory is poor. We hardly dare leave him home alone as he will do things such a leave the burner on or leave food in the oven & not shut it off.

If there were people trained in managing cases like Kevin's, if we would have been directed from the very beginning instead of being sent home with no services, I believe life would be better for our families. I have attached a copy of the letter we received from Kevin's Dr. in Minot stating that he needed assistance, supervision, mental and physical care, he only received those services with the help of his family. When I contact numerous health care systems, I got nowhere, it was very disappointing, and I am still struggling to find the right ones for Kevin. Medically Kevin is fine, cognitively he is not.

Community support is another area of importance. When a person survives a brain injury, the family is thrown into this world of disability without knowing how to cope. To know that I am not alone on this brain injury walk would give our families the strength that we need to survive each and everyday. Until February 3, 2011, Kevin was successfully employed, enjoying life, had many great friends, very helpful with chores around our home, we were very happily married, literally living the dream. The next day he was in a coma, unable to return to a job he loved &



was very successful at & our world is falling apart. It breaks my heart that it seems I do not often care to be with Kevin in the public; he does many inappropriate embarrassing & unacceptable gestures or comments. Sadly enough because of his brain injury, Kevin is not the man I married 32 years ago.

Currently, I have made contact with on person whose daughter has a brain injury; we seemed to instantly bond. There certainly must be others out there like us, but how do we connect? How do we find each other for support? I struggle to cope with this all by myself, family can only listen to me for so long, and they tell me this is killing me, sometimes I feel I have to agree.

Long term, I am not sure what will happen to Kevin. He drives a vehicle, sometimes stops on a green light and drives through a red light. I talked with our Chief of Police about this and his comment was that we cannot take his independence away! I continue to pray that he does have a serious accident and hurt or kill someone(s). My sister does what I call "Daddy daycare" as she will often take him to work with her if there are simple tasks for Kevin to do. I did not worry so many things about, prior to February 3, 2011.

Until your world is instantly turned upside down from a brain injury, it is virtually impossible to understand the depths of this. Families dealing with someone with a brain injury need to know there is a place they can turn for help. We need trained professionals right here in North Dakota whom can assist in the healing process for both the survivor and their families. We need resources who can find us because we do not know where or how to find them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Donna" is written with a large, looped 'D', and the last name "Wolf" is written with a large, looped 'W'.

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